

11.7.2007 - House Passes Critical Appropriations Bill

U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) praised passage of the conference report on two critical appropriations bills needed to fund military readiness and veterans programs and invest in the health and education priorities of the nation.

"This legislation restores funding for some of our most essential programs that was reduced or eliminated in the President's budget," said Rahall. "It maintains the commitment to West Virginia's soldiers that they will have the facilities and equipment they need to train and to serve, and the promise to our veterans that they will have access to quality and affordable health care. It also provides a needed financial infusion for community health services and health research, as well as monies for our children's education."

The conference report includes funding for a range of projects throughout West Virginia. Rahall personally secured \$400,000 in the bill for the relocation and expansion of the Center for Education at St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington; \$230,000 to assist with the renovation and construction of a new emergency room at Summers County Appalachian Regional Healthcare Hospital; and \$120,000 for the training and recruitment of captioners at Huntington Junior College.

The bill also will fund rural and community health care centers, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Community Services Block Grants, the operations of Social Security offices, and worker protection efforts in the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

"I was pleased to be able to vote in support of funds that will provide a shot-in-the-arm to Federal mine safety efforts. This new funding, thanks to the work of Senator Byrd as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, will boost the number of mine inspectors to ensure that our mines in southern West Virginia get the inspections required by law. As well, it will help to ensure that the new safety technologies envisioned in the Miner Act come to fruition," Rahall said.

The conference report includes \$150.7 billion for the 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill and \$64.7 billion the 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill. Highlights of the conference report include:

Military

Construction and Veterans Affairs (VA)

Department of

Veteran's Affairs: \$43.1 billion for veterans' medical care, claims processing personnel, and facility improvements.

Veterans' Health Care:

\$37.2 billion for VA hospitals and clinics, and research into conditions such as Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which are among the most common problems facing Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Military

Construction: \$21.5 billion for military construction projects, including \$129 million to construct 16 new child development centers and \$1.1 billion for the National Guard and Reserve.

Labor, Health and Education

Education: \$60.7 billion to improve education with targeted investments to:

- Support

No Child Left Behind programs that improve K-12 education such as Title I grants that benefit low-income children, teacher quality efforts, and after-school programs;

- Educate

kids with disabilities with IDEA Grants;

- Help

families pay for college with Pell Grants and other higher education initiatives.

Labor: \$12 billion

to enhance job training programs, including adult, youth, and dislocated worker training and Job Corps, and worker protection efforts at the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Health and Human

Services: \$68.5 billion for targeted efforts including:

- Improving health care through programs like Community Health Care centers to improve healthcare access, and programs to train nurses and other healthcare professionals;
- Advancing medical research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study diseases like diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's;
- Enhancing economic opportunities through Community Service Block Grants and Social Services Block Grants;
- Helping children get a leg up on school through Head Start;
- Improving public health protections through the Centers for Disease Control; and
- Helping families rising energy prices with the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Social Security Administration

(SSA): \$9.9 billion to reduce the disability claims backlog.

The conference report

must also be approved by the U.S. Senate before being sent to the White House. President Bush has threatened to veto the bill.